Attempted predation on young Malaysian Plovers *Charadrius peronii* by sand crabs

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The coastal flats north-west of Kuching, near Kampung Sibu Laut, Sarawak, are extensive and very gradually shelving, resulting in large areas of sand being exposed at low tide.

Malaysia's only resident, and rather uncommon wader, the Malaysian Plover *Charadrius peronii* is found in this habitat. I have located two pairs over a stretch of 10 km of this beach.

On 24 July 1994 I observed a pair of Malaysian Plovers feeding on the sand, accompanied by two downy young. Feeding was interrupted frequently as the male adult ran at crabs in the vicinity of the young and warded them off using a 'kick-boxing' technique. I watched this performance for 10 minutes or so and it was clear that the young were adequately protected. On a subsequent visit on 23 January 1995, I saw four full-grown birds in the area of the incident, so it would appear that the brood had been successfully reared.

With the aid of an entrenching tool I collected four crabs from their deep holes in the sand and preserved them in formalin for identification. These fast-moving sand crabs were red with a carapace width of 40 mm and overall width with legs relaxed of 80 mm. Their eyes were on tall stalks, and their pair of pincers were powerful and sharp enough to draw blood from my finger. The crabs were subsequently identified as *Ocypode ceratophthalma* of the family Ocypodidae.

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Notes on the diet of nestling White-throated Kingfishers *Halcyon smyrnensis* in Malaysia

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The food of adult White-throated Kingfishers *Halcyon smyrnensis* has been well documented (Ali and Ripley 1970, Mukherjee 1976, Cramp 1985, Roberts 1991, Fry *et al.* 1992), large insects such as beetles Coleoptera, grasshoppers and crickets Orthoptera, ants , crustaceans, fish, frogs Anura and lizards Sauria forming the major part of their diet. Only recently, however, has the diet of the young been described and this only in parts of their large range. Roberts (1991), for example, reports that a pair in Pakistan fed their young only on insects when they were small, and Cramp (1985) includes a record from Sri Lanka of nestlings being fed primarily on freshwater crabs and less frequently on frogs and fish. The following is a summary of six periods of observation, ranging from 10 minutes to 1 hour, taken from 12-17 March 1991, at a nest site in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia. The nest was in a 3 m high roadside bank within a public park, where dry grass areas were interspersed with large, often non-native tree species. The bank contained several old nest holes. A second pair of kingfishers was nesting approximately 200 m away, also in a roadside bank within the park. White-throated Kingfishers in Malaysia are attributed to the subspecies *fusca* (Fry *et al.* 1992).

In all, in 200 minutes of observation, the adults fed the young 21 times, both parents feeding themselves for periods of up to 20 minutes. Prey was mostly caught within a short distance of the nest and the adults were not thought to be visiting more distant wet areas (by the Selangor river and in the Kuala Selangor Nature Park). Observed prey brought to the young consisted of four lizards (from 4-9 cm in length), ants twice and other insects, including beetles taken from an area of freshly cut grass, on 14 other occasions. Towards the end of the study, the young approached the tunnel entrance to be fed and took larger prey. At this time one adult attempted to bring them a cicada — caught in flight as it left a tree branch — but was prevented from doing so because of human disturbance. During the periods of observation, the adults were prevented from feeding their young on two other occasions; in all cases the adults subsequently ate the food themselves. When feeding their young, the adults spent between 2 and 8 seconds in the nest tunnel (mean = 5.0, n = 11), this being a good indication of the nestlings' relatively advanced age. One adult spent

30 minutes there on the first day of observation, however, perhaps brooding the young.

The prey items given to the young did not seem appreciably different from those taken by the adults (see also Roberts 1991), which were observed consuming small lizards (4-6 cm in length), ants and other small insects. The adults were twice noted following grass-cutters, looking for disturbed insects and other prey.

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A breeding record for Minahassa Owl *Tyto inexspectata* from Dumoga-Bone National Park, Sulawesi, Indonesia

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The Minahassa Owl *Tyto inexspectata* is a rare owl that is seldom reported. It has been recorded from the north-eastern peninsula of Sulawesi and there is a single record from the north-central part of the island. The only previous evidence of nesting was from Coomans de Ruiter, who observed a pair on 8 April 1939 attending what appeared to be a nest hole in an *Elmerrillia ovalis* tree on the slopes of Mt Koemeresot (Bishop 1989).

During a birding trip to Sulawesi and Halmahera in August/September 1995 I stayed at the PHPA Research Station at Toraut, Dumoga-Bone National Park from 7-11 September.

At about 04h30 on the morning after my arrival I heard the feeding call of a young *Tyto* owl, which I quickly tracked down to a tall strangler-fig tree near the river, about 50 m from the station buildings. The calling bird was observed in a torch beam sitting on a branch about 25 m up in the tree. It was in juvenile plumage, which in the torchlight appeared to be a speckled greyish-white colour on the underparts, and somewhat more brownish on the wings. I was not able to identify the species involved but I then located another owl sitting above the calling juvenile. Although it was partly obscured, I was able to discern that it had pale underparts and a small, pale facial disc suggesting that it might be a Minahassa Owl. It was clearly not a Sulawesi Owl *T. rosenbergii*, which has a large dark brown facial disc and brownish-buff underparts. Not wishing to disturb the owls unduly I switched off the torch and sat in the darkness near the tree. About 10 minutes before daybreak, at approximately 05h05 an adult *Tyto* owl called several times from another part of the tree, then both adults flew to another tree where they alighted briefly before flying back into the strangler-fig, where they disappeared from view. Shortly afterwards the juvenile owl, which had been calling intermittently, scrambled down the branch to the central trunk region and disppeared from view in the network of aerial roots. A long sequence of the call of the juvenile bird and a short sequence of the adult were tape-recorded.

The following evening it rained heavily between 17h00 and 23h00 and no calls were heard from the owls.

On the evening of 9 September the feeding calls of the juvenile bird were heard at 20h30 and it was located on the same branch where it had been seen previously. One of the adult birds was perched next to it and I was able to confirm that it was a Minahassa Owl. I turned off the torch and could hear the adult making soft chuckling noises to the young bird, which had stopped calling and was presumably being fed. Shortly afterwards the adult left the tree and flew back into the forest. Between then and 00h00 the young bird called occasionally, usually a single call each time. From the forest I heard two different *Tyto* type calls, one similar to that of the adult Minahassa Owl heard the previous morning, and a deeper, stronger call which was presumed to come from the Sulawesi Owl, which also occurs in the area.

The next morning, about 04h30, the young owl started calling again repeatedly and the torch beam revealed both the adult and juvenile sitting close together, the former apparently feeding the latter. About 15 minutes before daybreak the adult (probably the female because it did not call) flew to another tree and